

*Chhattisgar : notes on its tribes, sects and castes.*—By P. N. BOSE, B. SC.  
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§ 1. A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF CHHATTISGAR.

*Name.*—The Bengal-Nagpur Railway will open up a tract of country which is now but little known to the public. In the Central Provinces, it is called “Chhattisgar.” Two derivations of the name have been proposed. According to the Central Provinces Gazetteer,\* Chhattisgar owes its name to thirty-six (*chhattis*) forts (*gar*) included within it. Serious objections, however, have been urged against this interpretation by Mr. Beglar of the Archæological Survey.† While in Behar he heard a tradition, that ages ago, in the time of Jarásandha, thirty-six families of chámárs had emigrated from that country and settled in a country far to the south of it, which was called “Chhattisghar” (thirty-six families). He was not at the time aware of any country which bore that name, and his inquiries with regard to it being ineffectual, he became rather sceptical about its existence. When, however, official duty brought him to Chhattisgar, the tradition he had heard in Behar came back to his mind. Here was a country far from Behar, and south of it, the people of which appeared to him to be singularly like the Beharis in language, dress, manners, and customs—a people, too, of which the chámárs formed a very important element. Mr. Beglar suggests that Chhattisgar derives its name from the thirty-six families of Behari chámárs who settled there; according to which interpretation ‘Chhattisgar’ should be spelt ‘Chhattisghar.’ Considering, that long intercourse had made Mr. Beglar perfectly familiar with the Beharis before he visited Chhattisgar, his interpretation becomes authoritative. Besides, it promises to throw some light on the history and affinities of one of the most remarkable peoples that inhabit India—the Chhattisgari chámárs. We must say, however, that as the word is pronounced by the people, it is difficult to make out whether “Chhattisghar” or “Chhattisgar” is the correct spelling; we have adopted the latter as the one in current use.

*Physical and political Geography.*—Chhattisgar as an administrative division of the Central Provinces comprises the districts of Raipur, Bilaspur and Sambalpur, and including Bastar, covers an area of about 53,000 square miles. But Chhattisgar proper includes Raipur and Bilaspur only; and we shall use the term in this restricted sense. It comprises a central plain covering an area of about 10,000 square miles

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

† Arch. Surv. Rep. Vol. VII.

surrounded by a forest-clad hilly country of a somewhat wider extent (about 12,000 square miles); strictly speaking, the plain country alone should be called Chhattisgar, and it is only for the sake of convenience that we have included the surrounding hill tract within it. The contrast between the hill and the plain country is sharp and striking. The former is clothed with thick jungle, little cultivated, and sparsely populated, the population consisting chiefly of aboriginal tribes. To the *shikari*, it affords sport in abundance; the tiger is especially abundant in the southern, and the wild buffalo in the eastern jungles, while in every direction, the antelope, the spotted deer, and other varieties of game may be found. The plain, on the other hand, is almost flat, perfectly denuded of jungle, well cultivated, and thickly populated. With the exception of a small narrow strip in the western portion, it is what is called *khalsa*, that is, under the direct management of the British Government. The hill tracts are partitioned amongst a number of zamindars and feudatory chiefs, who pay an annual tribute. The zamindars maintain their own police. The feudatory chiefs, whose gross revenue in most cases does not exceed that of second-class zamindars in Bengal, are invested with authority equal to that of a Holkar or Nizam. They not only keep their own police, but also have their Jails and civil and criminal courts.

*Geology and mineral resources.*—The configuration of the country well illustrates the intimate connection between geological structure and physical features. The plain is formed of Vindhyan sandstones, marls and limestones, which have been but little disturbed from their normal horizontal position. The hills surrounding it are, on the other hand, composed of older rocks which have undergone considerable disturbance and metamorphism. At the north-eastern extremity, about Korba there is a considerable outcrop of the coal-bearing strata (Gondwana System). The results of the coal-exploration conducted by the Geological Survey are not very encouraging with regard to the ground traversed by the Bengal-Nagpur railway; but, not very far from it, there is one tract near Korba where workable coal of good quality has been found. In the hills to the north, west, and south extensive iron-ores of exceptionally good quality exist. Iron-smelting is still carried on there to some extent in the primitive fashion. But with the opening of the railway, the industry already on the wane, will probably be nearly extinct. Copper and lead-ores exist; but their extent is not yet known. The sandstones of the plain are largely used for building purposes; and the limestones are quarried chiefly for road metal. In places the limestone is tolerably pure and would yield lime of good quality.

*Jungle produce.*—Of forest produce, lac and *Hurra* (*Haritaki*,

*Terminalia citrina*) are the most important. The former flourishes best on Kusam (*Carthamus tinctorius*) and Palás (*Butea frondosa*). But it is also grown, though to a very subordinate extent, on Baer (*Ziziphus jujuba*) and a few other trees. The lac is mostly taken to Mirzapur. The Hurra is exported to Europe, through Bombay.

*Agriculture.*—Chhattisgar is, or rather has been the land of plenty. To the people of the neighbouring districts, it has long been known as *khalauti*, or the “Land of the Threshing-floors.” Rice, wheat, and linseed are the chief crops. Rice and wheat were formerly sold—and that too not so very long ago—at fabulously cheap prices. Only five or six years ago, after the opening of the Nagpur-Chhattisgar Railway, rice used to be sold, at some distance from its terminus at Nandgaon, for Ro. 1-4 or less per maund. But the price in 1889 was Rs. 2-8, and will no doubt go up still higher when the Bengal-Nagpur Railway system is completed.

In the southern and eastern portion of Raipur, as well as in Bilaspur generally, rice is the principal crop. In the western portion of the plain, wheat appears to be more largely grown than rice. Wherever there is black soil (*kanhár*) wheat is preferably sown on it; whereas rice is chiefly grown on sandy soil. Rice, however, is the principal crop. The area on which rice is grown in the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur amounts to nearly two million acres, whereas the wheat area does not amount to more than 130,000 acres.

*History.*—The earliest traces of man we found in this district are some bone and pottery mounds by the Seonath river. They invariably occur in the plain country. Who the men were it is difficult to surmise. But, whoever they were, they had passed the stone age, and had been in the habit of using iron implements. In the south-western portion of the district of Raipur, away in the jungles, there are remains of rude forts and temples which tradition ascribes to a race of Ganli kings. No reliable information, however, is available about them. To a later period, belong the ruined temples and *Sati* pillars of Balod, Gurur, Sirpur &c., some of which date back to the beginning of the Christian era. Mr. Beglar of the Archæological Survey finds evidence in an inscription of the extension of the Chalukya power right into the heart of the modern district of Raipur.\*

The authentic history of Chhattisgar dates back only to the middle of the eighth century, when Raja Suradeva of the well known Haihai family ruled at Ratanpur† in the district of Bilaspur. The place is now

\* Arch. Surv. Rep. Vol. VII. p. 141.

† Central Provinces Gazetteer, p. 90. Mr. Beglar would not allow this town any greater antiquity than the middle of the 15th century. (*Op. cit.*, p. 165).

overgrown with jungle; but, extensive tanks and ruins testify to its former grandeur. Nineteen kings of the Haihai line had preceded Suradeva, but all that is known about them is of the vaguest character. Surrounded by barriers of high hills on all sides, Chhattisgar entirely escaped the Muhammadan invasion, and the Haihai dynasty ruled undisturbed till the middle of the eighteenth century when the country came under the sway of the Bhonslas of Nagpur.

Of less antiquity than the Haihaibansi rulers of Ratanpur were the Gond kings of Garha Mandla, Lanji and Chanda. The western portion of Chhattisgar, included in the zamindari of Sahuspur-Lohara, Gandai, Dhundi-Lohara, &c. belonged to one or other of these dynasties.

In 1818, Chhattisgar came under the superintendence of British officers; and in 1854, on the lapse of the province of Nagpur to the British Government, it was formed into a Deputy Commissionership with head quarters at Raipur. Since then a separate Deputy Commissionership has been established for Bilaspur.

## § 2. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE TRIBES &C.

I have left out the higher Hindu castes, Bráhmans, Rájputs, Káyasthas and Beniyás; the Muhammadans too and such castes as Dhobi, Mehter &c., who are chiefly met with in towns, have been omitted from these notes as they do not present any special features of interest, being settlers from Northern or Western India. Even of the specially Chhattisgari people, these notes do not pretend to be exhaustive, as they treat of those only with whom I came into personal contact. In thus restricting myself I hoped to have avoided errors into which second-hand information often leads,\* and to have attained correctness by sacrificing completeness.

The people, as elsewhere in India, may be broadly divided into Aryan and non-Aryan, or, perhaps less logically into Hindu and Aboriginal. Either of these methods of classification would answer well when we have to deal with such well-marked Aryan or Hindu castes, as Bráhmans, Káyasthas, and Beniyás, on the one hand, or such well marked non-Aryan or Aboriginal people as the Jungli Gonds on the

\* I may illustrate this by an instance, which will be referred to later on. The Central Provinces Gazetteer (to which I am greatly indebted) describes the caste of Hálvás to be distillers; and Sherring quotes this description in his great work on "Hindu Tribes and Castes," (Vol. II, p. 147). I did not, however, come across a single Hálvá who was a distiller; and I was told, that there was no such Hálvá in Chhattisgar or anywhere else. There is, however, a clan of the Telis called Hálías, who are distillers by profession. It is this similarity of name which probably led to the confusion.

other. But, it is difficult exactly to define the ethnological position of a good many of the castes treated of in these notes. The *chámárs*, for instance, one of the largest and most interesting castes in Chhattisgar are looked down upon by the Hindus, and in their faith they are rather aggressively anti-Hindu—the word Hindu being used in its popular sense. Yet, physically the *chámárs* resemble their Aryan more than their non-Aryan neighbours; and it is impossible to place them in either of these categories without giving rise to serious objections. Similar difficulties are experienced in classifying such castes as the *Kanwárs* the *Pankás* and *Hálvás*. In the present state of our knowledge a rigid system of classification would, I think, be rather disadvantageous than otherwise; I have not, therefore, adopted any. I may, however, mention in passing, that the *Gonds* have unquestionable Dravidian affinities, and that the *Bhunjyas*, the *Baigás*, the *Komárs*, and the *Saonras* probably belong to the *Kolarian* group. Whether the *Sudra* castes such as the *Telis*, the *Márárs*, the *Koshtás* &c., are Aryan or non-Aryan, or a mixture of the two, it is difficult to say exactly. I do not think any of them is of purely Aryan blood, some of them may be Hinduised non-Aryans. The process of transformation is still going on. The greater number of the *Gonds* who have settled in the plain country amongst the Hindus have adopted the manners and customs of the latter. They are proud to be called Hindus, and are ashamed to own affinity with their brethren of the jungles; and some few have succeeded so far as to be recognised as Hindus. Some of the castes are probably of mixed descent. The *Dhur Gonds* appear to be such.

Some castes or sub-castes are due solely to differences of habitat and environment; others to inequality of social position. The castes into which the *Gonds* are subdivided seem to be mostly explicable by one or other of these causes. Those who have settled in the plains have been greatly affected by their Hindu environment. They have entirely forgotten their own language, have taken to Hindu manners and customs; and will on no account have social intercourse with their brethren in the jungles. Thus we have two great castes, one comprising settlers in the plain country, and the other dwellers in the jungles. Amongst these, again, minor castes would be formed owing to geographical and social causes. A barrier, such as a range of hills, would prevent intercommunication and social intercourse and give rise to castes. People of high social position, those, for instance, who claim kinship with the once powerful *Gond* kings of *Garha-Mandla*, *Lanji* &c., would not associate with those of an inferior status, and would thus form a caste by themselves.

The sects of the *Satnámis*, the *Kabirpauthis* and the *Máu Bháns* are

very interesting. The followers of the last named sect were not separately entered at the last census; they are not, in fact, mentioned. This is an omission which it may be hoped, will not recur at the next census. In the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur the Kabirpanthis number 230,526, and the Satnámis 356,533. At the last census the population of these districts including Hindus, and Aborigines, numbered nearly three millions. The Kabirpanthis and the Satnámis, therefore, together form about 24 per cent. of the entire population. The Kabirpanthis do not appear to believe in any God beyond their Guru to whom they accord divine honours. The Márárs and the Bhuujiyas also did not express their belief in any God. They have *sthápanás* in their houses for their ancestors to whom they give offerings periodically.

The Satnámis are Monotheists, but like the Kabirpanthis they worship their Guru. The Mán Bháns are Vaishnavas.

All these sects, the Kabirpanthis, the Satnámis and the Mán Bháns, abjure casto and eschew flesh and fish and spirituous liquors. A section of the Satnámis abstain even from smoking.

Rice is the principal food of the people in the plain country, and *kodo* that of the Gonds and other tribes living in the jungles. Spirituous liquor (prepared from mhowa flower) is indulged in chiefly by the Gonds, especially those who live in the jungles.

The clothing of men is usually of the scantiest possible dimensions; but, that of women is, as a rule, ample and decorous. In the interior, strong, coarse, indigenous cloth is still largely in use; but with the extension of railways it is to a large extent giving way to cheaper, more showy, though less durable cloth of Manchester make. The fate of the weaving castes like that of the iron-smelters is scaled.

There are certain practices which are common to most of the tribes and castes described in this paper, and which may be conveniently mentioned here.

Re-marriage of widows is a general practice. A widow is allowed to wed herself to the younger brother of her deceased husband—a custom which appears to have largely prevailed in ancient India. She can, however, marry almost anybody she pleases in her own caste. The essential part of the ceremony of such marriage consisting, I am told, in making presents of *churis* (thin glass or earthen bracelets) to the bride—who, in her widowed condition, remains without any ornaments whatever—is called *churi* marriage. Being inexpensive, it is often resorted to by impecunious wife-hunters in preference to regular marriage which is rather costly. Marriage is certainly not allowed to be a failure in Chhattisgar. A man can of course take to himself as many

wives as his means will allow; and a wife can leave her lord for anybody else provided the latter compensates the injured husband, the damages being rated according to the customary marriage expenses of the caste.

The practice of worshipping the Thákur Deo and Mátá is almost universal. The former is the village god, and is worshipped by all the villagers twice a year, in the months of Paus and Chaitra. The Deo consists of a collection of peculiarly shaped stones usually placed on a sort of *dais* under an umbrageous tree. In Drug Subdivision (Raipur district), stool-shaped stones with two legs (supposed by General Cunningham to be Buddhist remains) take the place of the Thakur Deo. Elsewhere, he is supposed to be embodied in characteristically shaped pebbles. Besides the stones strictly representing the Thakur Deo, numbers of others are placed by their side. In fact, the seat of the Thakur Deo is a sort of local museum. Any curiosities found in the neighbourhood, either pebbles or other rock specimens or remains of old temples &c. are carefully deposited there. Before leaving a village, I always made it a point to pay my respects to the Thakur Deo, and the visit was always interesting, and sometimes instructive as well.

The worship of the Thakur Deo consists in sacrificing goats and fowls, and having a good feast. In some villages the headman (*malguzar*) collects subscriptions from the villagers, and the expenses of the festival are met from the fund so raised.

Mátá, called also Bhaváni and Káliká at places is the well known goddess of smallpox. She is greatly dreaded, and universally worshipped, being carefully lodged in a thatched shed in the outskirts of the village. She is usually represented by a pebble; a trident, an earthen lamp, and a pot for milk or water being its necessary adjuncts. She is worshipped in Baisakh with sacrifices of fowls.

Bhim Sen represented by his celebrated club, a large piece of stone daubed with vermilion, is universally venerated. Mr. Hislop says\* that "his worship is spread over all parts of the country, from Berar to the extreme east of Bastar, and that not merely among the Hinduised aborigines, who have begun to honour Khandoba, Hanumán, Ganpati, &c. but among the rudest and most savage of the tribe." This universal popularity of Bhim Sen (who cannot be any other than the well known Páñḍava) is a rather curious fact.

Belief in witchcraft is universal. People coming from Jabalpur and other places are in mortal terror of the Chhattisgaris who are supposed to be past masters in the black art. A Jabalpur servant of mine—a

\* Op. Cit. p. 16.

Christian to boot—would ascribe his fever from which he suffered greatly to the malice of a fellow Chhattisgari servant. I have been told many stories about the doings of supposed witches. At one time they were punished by the villagers rather heavily, but since the establishment of British rule, the witches have had a rather easy time of it.

### § 3. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TRIBES, SECTS, AND CASTES.

#### *The Gonds.\**

*Distribution.*—The Gonds extend from Hoshangabad on the Narbadá to the Godávari south of Bastar, a distance in a line of over 400 miles. The area of the country occupied by them is about 120,000 square miles. According to the last census they number 2,040,355 souls. Scattered over such an extensive country through no less than 18 districts, generally separated from one another by difficult natural barriers, it is no wonder, that we should find important local differences among them in language, religion, manners and customs. The account given here relates chiefly to the Gonds of Chhattisgar with whom the writer had personal intercourse.

Whence the Gonds came, and when they settled in India are points on which but little light has been thrown as yet. From their language they appear to belong to the Dravidian section of the aboriginal population of India, and to be more closely allied to the Tamil than to the Telugu subsection.†

*Gondi Songs.*—The late Mr. Hislop, to whom Indian science owes so much, collected some highly interesting songs of the Gonds. These have been published with an abstract English version in a work entitled "Papers relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces." They had never before been committed to writing, but have been handed down by tradition. It is probable, therefore, that we have not got them in their original form; indeed, embellishments from Hindu mythology are clearly discernible in their present garb. Still, the main structure of the songs is clearly recognised to be Gondi. They are five in number, but are linked together into one story, in which the gradual social evolution of the Gonds may be distinctly traced. The first song treats

\* Mr. Hislop observes: "The name of Gond, or Gund, seems to be a form of Kond, or Kund, the initial gutturals of the two words being interchangeable... Both terms are most probably connected with *Kondá*—the Telugu equivalent for a mountain—and therefore will signify the 'hill people.'" (Papers relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces, p. 3.)

† Caldwell's "Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages," 2nd edition, pp. 5 3-516.



of the creation of the world and of the Gonds. It presents a very life-like picture of the primitive condition of the Gonds. When they were born.

“Hither and thither all the Gonds were scattered in the jungle ;

Places, hills and valleys, were filled with the Gonds.

Even trees had their Gonds. How did the Gonds conduct themselves ?

Whatever comes across them, they must needs kill and eat it ;

They made no distinction. If they saw a jackal they killed

And ate it ; no distinction was observed ; they respected not antelope, sambar and the like.

They made no distinction in eating a sow, a quail, a pigeon,

A crow, a kite, an adjutant, a vulture.

A lizard, a frog, a hectle, a cow, a calf, a he- and she-buffalo,

Rats, handieoots, squirrels—all these they killed and ate.

So began the Gonds to do. They devoured raw and ripe things ;

They did not bathe for six months together ;

They did not wash their faces properly, even on dunghills they would fall down and remain.

Such were the Gonds born in the begining.

A smell was spread over the jungles.

When the Gonds were thus disorderly behaved.

They became disagreeable to Mahadeva,

Who said ; “The caste of the Gonds is very bad ;

I will not preserve them, they will ruin my hill Dhavalagiri ;

I perceive here and there smells.’”

In a note on this passage, the editor observes : “This somewhat sarcastic description . . . of the habits of the Gonds is probably of Hindu origin.” But, the description is not at all sarcastic ; nor is it even exaggerated. I have personal experience of Gonds whose habits are exactly the same as those so vividly depicted in the above passage. In fact, the present normal condition of the Gonds living in jungles is not far different from the primitive condition described in it.

The song then goes on to relate how for their misbehaviour all the Gonds except four were imprisoned by Mahadeva. The four Gonds who escaped the fate of their brethren,

“.....travelled onward over hills.

Thence they went and saw a tree rising upright as a date tree, which they climbed and looked about.

They said : ‘There is no hiding place for us.’

But, one of them looked and saw a place named Kachikopa Lahugad.\*

They went by the jungly road and searched that place.”

The second song relates how the four runaways first lived by hunting alone, and then gradually learnt rude cultivation. Lingo, who is worshipped by some classes of Gonds as a god, was brought into existence by Bhagavan to better the condition of the Gonds. He went to the four Gonds who had taken refuge at Kachikopa Lahugad, and was kindly received by them. They had been living on game which they ate cooked or raw. Lingo told them to cut down trees and get a field ready. But,

“..... Their hands were blistered, and each blister was as large as an Aola fruit.†

They threw down their hatchets and came to Lingo,

(And said): “Our hands are blistered, therefore we threw down our hatchets.”

They went aside and sat down. Then arose Lingo and held a hatchet in his hand,

And went on cutting trees; the trees fell, their roots were dug up.

Thus he began to cut down jungle. In an hour he made a good field.

(They said): “Our hands are blistered and not one tree have we cut down.

But Lingo in one hour has cut down several trees;

He has made the black soil (appear), and has sown rice and hedged it round.”

This is the sort of cultivation which the Gonds learnt, which in many parts they still practise, and which they would not leave for any other if they could help. It goes by the name of *Dáhi*. Since the prohibition of the reckless cutting down of trees in British territory, the Gonds have had to take to the plough in some parts, but nowhere do they appear to have done so with a heart as yet.

The four Gonds of Kachikopa Lahugad were unmarried. Lingo set out in search of wives for them. An old giant of the name of Rikad Gawadi had seven daughters, Lingo inserted a bamboo stick in the hollow of a gourd and made a guitar.

“He plucked two hairs from his head and strung it.

\* “The meaning in Gondi is the ‘Iron Valley—the red hills’; a nomenclature very applicable to the mineral products and external aspect of many hills in the Gond country.” (Hislop, *op. cit.* part III, p. 6, foot note.)

† Sanskrit, Amalaki, *Phyllanthus emblica* (Willd.)

He held a bow and fixed eleven pegs to that one stick, and played on it.

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He approached the fire where Rikad Gawadi was sleeping.

The giant seemed like a log lying close to the fire ; his teeth were hideously visible.

His mouth was gaping."

The effect of music on the mind of a savage is well described. The old giant had, in fact, been so charmed that he gave Lingo free permission to take his daughters away. Lingo brought them and married them informally to the four Gonds of Kachikopa Lahugad. In time, however, they got jealous of Lingo, though most unreasonably, and killed him.

I have not space for any more extracts from the songs, enough, however, has been quoted already to show how interesting they are, and how valuable from an ethnological point of view.

The third song relates the revival of Lingo, and his delivery of the Gonds who had been imprisoned by Mahadeva on account of their filthy habits. The fourth song treats of the subdivision by Lingo of the Gonds into tribes, and the institution of the worship of the Gond gods ; and the fifth takes another step towards civilisation—the institution by Lingo of the rites of marriage among the Gonds.

*Distribution of the Gonds in Chhattisgar.*—The Gonds try to avoid the plain country where they have to compete with the Hindus and Satnami chamars, and prefer to live in the jungle-clad hills, especially in the feudatory states and zamindari's where they can satisfy their natural propensity for jungle produce, and where they can to a certain extent avoid using the plough which they hate. In that portion of the district of Raipur which is called *khalsa* (*i. e.*, managed directly by the British Government), and which consists chiefly of an open plain country, the Gonds form only 18·6 per cent. of the total population and the greater majority of them more or less Hinduised, whereas they muster strong in the feudatory states, especially in Kanker, which is entirely a hilly country, where they form no less than 62 per cent. of the total population. In the feudatory states of Khairagar, Nándgaon and Chhuikhádán, which, in their physical features combine the characters of Kanker and of the *khalsa* portion of Raipur, the Gonds form about 24 per cent. of the entire population.

*Types of Civilisation.*—There is another feature about the distribution of the Gonds which is noteworthy. Those who have settled in the plain country approximate to the Hindus ; indeed, aspire to pass as such. They have forgotten their dialect, and are often ashamed of own affinity

with their brethren of the hills whom they hold in undisguised contempt. Like their Hindu neighbours they eschew beef and pork. Some of them worship Hindu gods, such as Mahámái, Mahádeo, and entertain Brahman priests; and some assume the holy thread. The chiefs of Kawarda and Khairagar, though, I am informed, of Gond origin, call themselves Kshatriyas; and the chief of Khairágar has succeeded in forming alliances with needy Kshatriya families. Most of the plains Gonds, especially those who are well-to-do, call themselves Hindus, and are proud to be recognised as such. They worship, however, almost invariably, the great Gond god—the Buddha Deo.

The farther one goes away from the plains, the more Gonds are found unaffected by Hindu influence and approximating to the primitive type. In fact, the stages of civilisation represented historically in the songs referred to above, are here represented in space, the comparatively civilised Hinduised type prevailing in the cultivated plain country, and the primitive type in the wildernesses bordering it. The hill Gonds are more or less omnivorous; and altogether in their habits approximate very closely to their primitive ancestors, who, as related in the song quoted above, were imprisoned by Mahádeo for polluting the hill Dhavala-giri. They never have anything to do with Hindu gods or Brahman priests.

From the vocabulary of the Gonds it is possible to form some idea of their primitive civilisation. They not only have names for most wild animals and forest trees with which they must have been well acquainted, but there are special Gondi terms for such domesticated animals as the elephant, the horse and the camel. The only weapons for which there are Gondi names are the hatchet, the trusty and constant companion of the hill Gond, and the bow and arrow, which most aboriginal people are very expert in using. For barber, carpenter, and weaver, they have no Gondi names; and they still stand in little need of such differentiated professions. Plough they call *nágar*, a Hindi word; and as, already observed, they have not taken to it with a heart as yet. They have their own terms for iron, and for workers in iron—iron smelting is still largely practised by them. But for copper and gold the terms are Hindi. They appear to have been in the habit of bartering in kind as they have no special term for any kind of coin. They can count in their own dialect only up to ten, beyond that they count in Hindi. They have Gondi terms for sun, moon, stars, day, evening and night, but none for week, month, and year. Altogether the social progress which the Gonds attained was of a very low type; and it is no wonder, that as soon as they came in contact with the more civilised Hindus, they should have endeavoured to take to the ways of the latter.

*Physical appearance, character, &c.*—The physical features of the hill Gonds are distinctly Mongolian. I found the Mongolian characters most pronounced in the wild country on the borders of Chhattisgar and Mandla—thick lips, scanty hair, compressed nose, and short stature. But in the plain country, it is often difficult to tell a Gond from a Hindu, the former having approximated to the latter not only in habits, but also in appearance. The men are slim, well built, and active (on occasions), dexterous in the use of the hatchet, and in the jungles, of the bow. Like most other aboriginal tribes, the Gonds are very strongly addicted to intoxicating drinks. When not under the influence of fear, they are lively, frank, and truthful. One could not wish to have more agreeable and more useful companions in the jungles than they are. The clothing of the men is of the scantiest possible dimensions; but the women are as a rule decently clad. Both are very fond of ornamenting themselves with trinkets.

*Deities.*—Budha Pen is the great god of the Gonds. He is universally worshipped, even by those who have become Hinduised. Two grand festivals appear to be held in his honour, (in the months of Mágh? and Bhádra?) when the usual offerings of cocoanut, betelnut &c., are made, and cows, goats, and fowls are sacrificed. The sacrifice of the cow is considered an essential part of the worship by the hill Gonds. A few stones daubed with vermilion represent the god. Serpent worship is prevalent to some extent. There are images of serpents at Sahuspur, in Sahuspur-Lohara zamindari, and at Ambagar in Chauki zamindari. I was told at one place, that the serpent is worshipped every three years when a vessel of milk is left for him. Lingo is held in great veneration in some parts; but, elsewhere, the very name is unknown. Dulha Deo, who is the great god of another aboriginal tribe, the Baigas, is also greatly esteemed in some places, as also the Hindu god, Mahadeo.

Besides these, there appear to be special minor deities for each *got*. The Gonds are divided into 5 *gots*. One of these *gots* comprises worshippers of three deities, another of four deities, a third of five deities: and so on. The three deities of the first of these *gots* are, I was told, the bull, the tiger, and the crocodile! These animals are considered sacred by, and would not contribute towards the food of, those who belong to this particular *got*; but the members of the other *gots* would not scruple to eat the flesh of any of these animals! I cannot, however, vouch for the correctness of this information; I often inquired about the *got*-gods, but never got any satisfactory answer. The four deities of the four-god *got* are, I was informed at one place, the Budha Deo himself and his three brothers, Aginkumár, Rausárna, and Áudia Singha; at

another place I was told, the four gods were the tortoise, the crocodile, a kind of fish called *bodh*, and a ferocious bird the name of which was given as *sarewá*.

The Gonds of course believe in evil spirits and witches. But they do not appear to have any clear idea of a next world. Notwithstanding repeated questioning, I failed to ascertain if they had any word for it.

There is no regular priesthood amongst the Gonds. The nuptial, funeral, and similar ceremonies are performed under the lead of aged relatives. But generally in every village there is a man who is supposed to have the power of charming tigers, or preventing by *mantras* such calamities as drought, cholera &c. He is called "Baigá." The name is derived from a tribe called Baigas to be mentioned later on who are especially credited with these powers.

In some parts, a group of villagers acknowledge a head called *Sonwani* who presides at panchayets to settle disputes.

*Ceremonies.*—After a period varying from a few days to one month, the child is named and caste people are fed.

Marriage usually takes place after puberty. There is no restriction as to the number of wives which a man may take to himself. But, marriage being a costly concern, it is only the well-to-do who can indulge in polygamy. The ceremony consists of four stages, at each of which the bridegroom has to spend according to his social status. In the first stage called *sagái* (a kind of betrothal), the bridegroom has to make a present of rice, liquor, and some cash to the father of the bride, and of *churi*, and *phunri* (silk tape for the hair) to the bride. The second stage (*barokhi*) consists in bringing the bride to the home of the bridegroom—a reversal of the ordinary Hindu process—when presents of grain, clothes, and cash have to be made to the father of the bride. At the third stage, the bride and bridegroom are anointed with oil and turmeric and they go round a polo seven times. The ceremony takes place with great feasting and the usual drunkenness. The fourth stage of the ceremony consists in sending the bride to her home.

When the bridegroom has not the means to make the necessary presents to the father of the bride, he serves the latter as a labourer for a period varying according to the price set upon the lady.

*Burial and Cremation.*—The dead are usually buried with head to the north and feet to the south. Great care is taken of the graves of distinguished persons. Earthen mounds are raised over these, which are kept very clean, and protected from the sun and rain by a shed. Rude clay figures of men and horses are kept on the mound, symbolic probably of the way in which the departed have gone to heaven. A few days after death, the *srádh* takes place, when caste people are fed.

When cremation is practised—as it is by those who are somewhat Hinduised—mounds are sometimes raised over the ashes of the dead. These mounds usually point north-south, but sometimes east-west. Quantities of paddy are sometimes put on the mounds, as offerings to the spirits of the dead.

*Castes.*—The Gonds, like the Hindus, are divided into castes, of which I have met with the following :—\*

1. Ráj.
2. Kureti.
3. Khatalwár.
4. Dhur.
5. Koitor or Jháriá. (Sometimes also called Rávanvamsi).
6. Pardhán (including Páthária, and also Ágariá?)

The first three castes have conformed more or less to Hindu customs, and count among their members a large number of well-to-do Gonds, such as the zamindars of Chauki and Sahuspur-Lohara. They take the holy thread, and, as a rule, venerate Hindu gods. But they may be distinguished from the Hindus, by their worship of the Buddha Deo, either openly or in secret. The plains Gonds belong almost exclusively to one or other of the first four classes. The hill Gonds belong almost quite as exclusively to the Koitor or Jháriá class.

*Jharia* literally means ‘jungly’; and Mr. Hislop observes† that the meaning of ‘*Koitor*’ is “evidently associated with the idea of a hill”; so that, the name of the fifth class would appear to signify simply Gonds who inhabit the jungle-clad hills. Those who settled in the plain country, and imitated the manners and customs of the Hindus, began to look down upon their brethren of the hills. Hence the former would have no social intercourse with the latter; and thus two great classes would be naturally formed. A further subdivision of the plains Gonds is probably due to social and local causes. The Raj Gonds, for instance, claiming kinship with the royal families of Garha-Mandla, and Lanji, would naturally form a caste.

The Dhur Gonds, who are very numerous in the plain country, occupy a lower status in society than those mentioned above. I suspect the

\* Mr. Hislop mentions the following division into twelve and a half classes in imitation of the Hindus: Ráj, Raghawál, Dadave, Katulyá, Pádál, Dhobi, Ojhyál, Thotyál, Koilabhutál, Koikopál, Kolám, Mádyál, and an inferior sort of Pádál, as the half-caste. These divisions probably hold in the country about Chándá and Nág-pnr. Katulyá is probably identical with the Khatalwár of Chhattisgar. Pádál is identical with Pardhán or Páthári; Kureti and Dhur cannot be identified with any of the classes mentioned by Hislop, and appear to be peculiar to Chhattisgar.

† Op. Cit. p. 14.

name is of Hindu origin, being corrupted from 'Bidur,' which signifies the mixed descent of the caste. Amongst the peculiarities mentioned to me of the caste, one is that their marriage is consummated in one day, whereas that of the others takes several days.

The *Pardhāns* form a small caste. Their social status is considered lower than that of the other Gonds. The *Āgarias*, who are iron smelters, appear to form a subsection of them, as also the *Pátháris* who correspond to the *Bhāts* of the Rajputs.

The village 'Baiga' mentioned before not unoften belongs to the Pardhan caste. The name Pardhan appears to be of Sanskritic origin, signifying 'chief'; and it is rather strange that the caste should be held in such low estimation. "About the Mahadeva hills" observes Mr. Hislop\* "the higher Pardhāns act as Pujaris, and the lower as rude musicians, the Koitors seeming to look down upon both offices as somewhat menial."

The members of the castes mentioned above belong to one or other of the following *gots* :—

I. Worshippers of three Deities.

- (1) Markám.
- (2) Sorí.
- (3) Khosro.

II. Worshippers of four Deities.

- (4) Tekam (a kind of tree, the teak).
- (5) Neitam. (Nei = a dog).
- (6) Karíám. (Charcoal? or from *kar*, cock?).
- (7) Singram (or Sindram? after a variety of fish).
- (8) Malgam.

III. Worshippers of five Deities.

- (9) Gháore.
- (10) Pureti.
- (11) Kibuáká.
- (12) Porte.
- (13) Purám.

IV. Worshippers of six Deities.

- (14) Wikká.
- (15) Kattam (Kachlam?)
- (16) Karám.
- (17) Erkará.
- (18) Paoli.
- (19) Marrapoi.

\* *Op. Cit* p. 18.



- (20) Kuroti.
- (21) Tunrekke.
- (22) Selám.
- (23) Etti.
- (24) Otti.

V. Worshippers of seven Deities.

- (25) Kunjam.
- (26) Márai (Mára = tree).
- (27) Dhurua.

&c.

It would be interesting to know the signification of these terms. The meanings of a few I could gather are given. It will be seen that they refer to some tree, or animal. The names of some of the special gods of the five groups just mentioned have been given before. They refer mostly to animals, such as the crocodile, the bull, the tiger &c.

The *gots* into which the worshippers of the three deities (which are the bull, the tiger, and the alligator) are divided are what are called *Bhaibunds*, and they cannot intermarry; they must form alliances with other *gots*. Similarly the worshippers of the four deities are *Bhaibunds*; and so on. It is interesting to note in this connection, that the "Kols are subdivided into two or three hundred groups each of which is called after an animal or a tree; and the rule is that a member of a particular animal group, such as the snakes, the tortoises, the eels, or the mangooses, may not marry within that group."\*

*Select Vocabulary.*

ENGLISH OR HINDI.	GONDI.	REMARKS.
a) Cereals &c.		
Wheat	gok	
Peas	bairala	
Ashar	rahari	Appears to be a corruption of the Hindi word.
Urid	pupul	
Kodo	koda	
Gram	nadai	
Arsi	arsa	Corruption of Hindi.
Paddy	wanji	
Rice	nuka	
Tilli	nung	
Bread ( <i>Chapati</i> ).	sádi	
Flour	pindi	
Salt	naor	
Tobacco	máku	
Sugarcane	clauda	
Liquor	dádugo	

\* Abstract of Mr. H. H. Risley's paper read before the Anthropological Institute of London.—*Nature* for July 31, 1890, p. 335.

ENGLISH OR HINDI.	GONDI.	REMARKS.
(b) Domesticated animals &c.		
Cow	tháli	
Calf	páíá	
Dog	náí	
Cat	bilár	
Sheep	bhedal	Hindi. Corruption of Hindi.
Goat	bakrá	Do. Do.
Pip	paddi	
Horse	podá	Do. Do.
Elephant	háti	Do. Do.
Camel	hutum	Do. Do.
Cock	wágoti	Ghoghoti (Hislop).
Hen	kar	
Egg	mench	
Milk	pál	
(c) Wild animals		
Tiger	pulíál	
Leopard	chital	
Bear	arjal	
Nilgai	dhumoi	
Sambar	mán	
Deer	kodrá	
Wild dog	kherá náí	
Jackal	kolhiál	Corruption of Hindi.
Rabbit	malol	
Peafowl	mal	
(d) Wild and cultivated trees.		
Teak	teká	
Sáj	mardi	
Dhowra	werma	
Mhowa	idu	
Bija	bija	
Peopul	gáhma	
Tendu	tumri	
Schara	doudera	
Mango	marká	
Brinjal	singihápa	
(e) Metals, implements, &c.		
Iron	kachi	
Copper	tám	Hindi.
Silver	kuro	
Gold	sona	Do.
Hatchet	márs	
Spear	gorká	
Matchlock	banduk	Do.
Sword	talwár	Do.
Bow	wil	
Arrow	káun	
Fort	gar	
Battle	ladái	Do.
King	rája	Do.

ENGLISH OR HINDI.	GONDI.	REMARKS.
Army	mal	
Sport	háwing	
Plough	nágar	Do.
(f) Miscellaneous.		
Barber	mán	Do.
Carpenter	badái	Do.
Weaver	mehrá	(Name of a caste.)
Smith	kháti	
Shepherd	kopa	
Village	nár	
Pice	paísá	Hindi.
Rupee	rupoá	Do.
Kandi	kandá	Do.
Leaf	ákc	
Flower	pungár	
Fruit	pádi, káia	
Marriage	maduni	
Bridegroom	duláh	
Bride	duli	
Infant	chháwá	Do.
Boy	chudur	Addresssd as Bábu.
Girl	tudi	Do. Nuni.
Middle-aged man	reíá nun	
Middle-aged wo- man	máju	
Old man	sedá	
Old woman	sedo	
Sun	din	
Moon	nalench	
Star	sukkun	
Evening	din ndit	Hindi.
Month	máhiána	Do.
God	pen	
Goddess	pedi	
Witch	dhuki, pasro	
Truth	thanka	
Falsehood	fándi	

*The Bhunjias.*

*Distribution.*—The Bhunjias are found in the south-eastern portion of the Raipur district, in the Khariar and Bindra Nawagar zamindaries. At the census of 1881, they numbered 4,721.

*Language.*—The language of the Bhunjias is curiously like Bengali, as the following vocabulary will testify :

<i>English</i>	<i>Bhunjia.</i>
Hair	... kesa.
Head	... muda.
Face	... mukha.
Eye	... ámkhi.
Nose	... nása.

<i>English.</i>	<i>Bhunjiya.</i>
Thigh	... jánu.
Horse	... ghodá.
Dog	... kukura.
Tiger	... bággha.
Bear	... bhálu.
House	... ghara.
Rice (uncooked)	... chála.
Rice (cooked)	... bháta.
Road	... márga.
Sun	... suraj.
Moon	... chandra.
I	... ámi.
You	... tumi.

*Worship.*—The Bhunjiyas do not appear to have any gods. They venerate the sun and the moon, and have *sthápanás* for their ancestors to whom offerings are made. There is a Pujári for a certain number of villages, who corresponds to the Baigá of the Gonds. He is supposed to possess the power of checking epidemics and the ravages of tigers, and receives voluntary contributions from the villagers.

*Ceremonies, food, &c.*—The marriage ceremony lasts for three days, and presents are made to the father of the bride as usual. After marriage, the cooking utensils are thrown away. If the wife visits her father's home she appears to get a very cold reception, at least so it would seem to a stranger; for she is not allowed to enter the house, but has to live outside and cook for herself.

The kitchen, which is invariably detached, is kept scrupulously clean, ornamented on the outside with red paint. There is a sort of veranda attached where the male members (who are not allowed to enter the kitchen) partake their meals. The ladies of the household carry their scruples to such an extent, that should anybody (not a Bhunjiya) even touch the kitchen, it becomes polluted and must be burnt down! The Bhunjiyas never use any metallic vessels, which are considered impure.

The men are allowed to drink liquor and to eat fowls, but they appear to be very slow about availing themselves at least of the former privilege. For a most wholesome check is exercised by the fair sex, which more civilized people would do well to imitate. I am informed that the ladies of the house who never touch spirits, would not admit the men into the sleeping apartments if they smelt of liquor, and as they are forbidden entry into the kitchen, the fate of inebriates must be a very hard one.

I was told by our informant, that on festive occasions, the invited

guests are given uncooked rice and dāl, which they cook separately and eat. I learnt from another source, however, that on such occasions the male guests would be allowed to eat together, but not the female. All the observances of the tribe are evidently meant to preserve great purity amongst the fair sex.

The dead are buried. A hatchet and vessels for drinking water are left on the grave.

I am told, curiously enough, that the *gots* of the Bhunjias are similar to those of the Gonds.

*Saonras.*

*Distribution.*—A branch of the great Savara tribe. Like the Bhunjias the Savaras are found in the south-eastern portion of the district of Raipur. At the last census they numbered 3,849. They are good cultivators, and not expert at woodcraft like the Bhunjias and the Komárs.

*Worship.*—The Savaras have *sthápanás* in their houses for Mahá-læhmi to whom offerings of fowls &c. are made in Chaitra. Dulhá Deo also is worshipped.

*Language.*—From their language they appear to be allied to the Bhunjias. A few English words and their equivalents in the Savara tongue are given below.

Sun	...	...	...	bela.	Rice	...	...	...	chāl.
Moon	...	...	...	yon.	Wild boar	...	...	...	baráha.
Water	...	...	...	pán.	Pig (domesticate)	..	..	..	ghusrá.
Bird	...	...	...	ehiri.	Cloth	...	...	...	dhati.
Tiger	...	...	...	bágh.	Month	...	...	...	tunḍ.
Bear	...	...	...	bhála.	Tooth	...	...	...	dánt.
Dog	...	...	...	kukur.	Son	...	...	...	pilá.
Cat	...	...	...	billi.	Daughter	...	...	...	tugil.
Cow	...	...	...	gáyá.	Eye	...	...	...	ákhk.
Paddy	...	...	...	dhán.	Nose	...	...	...	nák.

*Ceremonies.*—The young are buried, and the old cremated; caste people are fed three days after a death.

Unlike most other tribes in Chhattisgar, no money present is made to the father of the bride.

*Gots:* Khutia, Juriá, Jhákar, Májhi, &c.

*Komárs.*

*Distribution.*—These are found in the same parts as the Bhunjias, and numbered 3,641 at the last census.

*Worship.*—Dulha Deo, Bhaváni, and the Earth, besides Ráur Gosám and Kachna Dhuma, who are represented by stones put up in jungles are venerated.

## Vocabulary.

Father	...	...	...	bábá.	Foot	...	...	...	putoá.
Sister	...	...	...	bái.	Leg	...	...	...	ređi.
Wife	...	...	...	mántin.	Hand	...	...	...	putoá páte.
Son	...	...	...	noná.	Finger	...	...	...	ántakhá.
Daughter	...	...	...	cheđa.	Arm	...	...	...	đhmuť.
Piece	...	...	...	cháu.	Ear	...	...	...	kána.
Dál	...	...	...	dáu.	Nose	...	...	...	nási.
Wheat	...	...	...	pit.	Mouth	...	...	...	tomuđa.
Bullock	...	...	...	bailá.	Head	...	...	...	muđa.
Arrow	...	...	...	káuŋđa.	Hair	...	...	...	wáu.
Bow	...	...	...	đhau.	Beard	...	...	...	goch.
Tobacco	...	...	...	dhungíá.	Tiger	...	...	...	bágh.
Wood	...	...	...	dáru.	Leopard	...	...	...	đurká.
Bird	...	...	...	litto.	Sámbar	...	...	...	jivád.
Dog	...	...	...	kmcklo.	Boar	...	...	...	baráha.
Cat	...	...	...	biláo.	Sun	...	...	...	suraj.
Iron	...	...	...	lohá.	Moou	...	...	...	jond.
Thigh	...	...	...	jam.	Go	...	...	...	jáo cheđa.
					Give	...	...	...	dihá.

The general term for addressing women is “*nágráin*,” that for addressing wife is “*jhi*.”

From this vocabulary, it will appear, that while certain words are common to the Bhunjiya and Savara dialects, there are others which are peculiar.

*Manners and Customs.*—For marriage the bridegroom has to serve the bride’s father for a certain period (4 years or so)—a custom which is met with also amongst the Gonds and some other tribes, when the father of the bridegroom is not in a position to make the needful presents to the father of the bride. Amongst the Komárs, however, there does not appear to be any alternative. This is probably owing to their chronic impecuniosity, as they are bad cultivators, worse than the Gonds, and subsist mainly upon sport and woodcraft.

The men drink, but not the women. As amongst the Bhunjiyas, greater purity is expected of the women, than of the men. The latter, for instance, are allowed to partake of food cooked by Gonds, whereas the former are not.

The young are buried, and the old cremated.

*Gots.*—As in the case of the Bhunjiyas, it is rather strange, that the names of the *gots* should be similar to those of the Gonds, from whom they appear to be radically different in language. Some of the *gots* named to me are *Neítam*, *Sori*, *Markam* &c.

*Names of men*—*Lachman*, *Jharia*, *Budhu*, *Bahadur*, &c.

*Names of women.*—*Nari*, *Lachni*, *Dukhdei* &c.

*Baigás (Bhumias).*

These are most numerous in the wilds of the Mandla district and there is only a sprinkling of them in the north-western portion of Chhattisgar in the feudatory state of Kawarda. Like the hill Gonds, they are strongly averse to cultivation and prefer living on jungle produce. In their features, they have not the marked Mongolian characters which the Gonds have. They shave their head in front; and the long back hair is tied in a knot behind. They speak the Chhattisgari dialect in Chhattisgar.

Dulhá Deo is the great god of the Baigás. But Bhaváni is also worshipped. The Baigas are greatly respected by the other tribes and are sometimes called Bhumias. Some of them are supposed to be gifted with supernatural powers, especially in checking the ravages of tigers. The priests of the Gonds (who are themselves Gonds,) are called Baigás. Hence some confusion has arisen; and the Baigá tribe in Bilaspur was probably owing to this reason included amongst the Gonds at the last census. The tribe, however, is quite distinct physically as well as in language and other characters.

The essential portion of the marriage ceremony consists (as in the case of the Gonds and most other tribes) in going round a pole 7 times.

*Gots.*—*Márai, Dhurná &c.*

*The Binjávárs.*

There is only a sprinkling of these in the eastern portion of Chhattisgar. From the fact that Dulhá Deo is their principal deity, they appear to be closely allied to the Baigás.

*Gots.*—*Lámni, Múnji, Endja, Láen &c.*

*Kanwárs.*

The Kanwárs claim descent from the Kshatriyas, and worship the Jaghrapháud, whom they consider their chief deity. But they also appear to recognize Dulhá Deo, the great god of the Baigas, and Buđhá Deo, the great god of the Gonds. The dead are also buried, an essentially non-Hindu practice. In fact, the Kanwárs combine in themselves partly aboriginal and partly Hindu characters.

*Ceremonies.*—Five days after a birth, the caste men are fed. At marriage, the bride and bridegroom, both anointed with oil and turmeric go round a pole 7 times at the bride's as well as at the bridegroom's. The bridegroom puts on the holy thread at the marriage ceremony.

When parents die, the head is shaved clean, and after 5 days caste-men are fed: on the death of other relations, the head is only partly shaved.

With regard to food and drink, the Kanwárs, at least professedly,

are strictly Hindu, fowls and pigs as well as intoxicating liquors being prohibited.

*Gots.*—*Bag-dehria, Dhankul, Khanrádhar, Banjári &c.*

*The Hálvás.*

Mr. Hislop classes the Hálvás with Gonds.\* Following him, Mr. Sherring does the same; but the latter has them also amongst non-aboriginal tribes.† Their affinities are doubtful, but, whatever they may be, I doubt the kinship of the Hálvás to the Gonds.

The Hálvás are an agricultural tribe found in the southern portion of the Raipur district. They speak the Chhattisgari dialect and profess to have come from Bastár. Their chief deity is Kanhálin who is worshipped with sacrifices of goats &c. The chief reasons which lead me to think that they are not Gonds, are (1) the fact, that they do not venerate the Buđhá Deo, which even the most Hinduised Gonds do; and (2) the fact, that the gots of the Hálvás are quite distinct from those of the Gonds.

In the Central Provinces Gazetteer,‡ the Hálvás are said “to gain their living chiefly by distilling spirits, and worship a pantheon of glorified distillers, at the head of whom is Bahadur Kalál.” This statement has also been quoted by Sherring. But, there must be some confusion, as I have not come across a single Hálvá who earns his living in the way represented here; nor are the Hálvás aware of any members of their caste doing so anywhere.

Except on occasions of marriage and similar festivities, they profess to abstain from drinking.

The dead are buried.

GOTS: *Mahla, Raut, Pátac &c.*

*Chámár (Satnámi Sect).*

The chámárs form the largest caste in Chhattisgar, numbering 248,429 in the Raipur, and 95,020 in the Bilaspur district, that is to say they form about 12 per cent. of the total population of these districts which is estimated at 3 millions.

The chámárs, except a few to be mentioned later on, all belong to the Satnámi sect. They are a fine, sturdy race of agriculturists, rather tenacious of their rights, and, as they are united, quite capable of holding their own against the Hindus who look down upon them with great contempt. They also sometimes call themselves Rai Dásis after Rám Dás, “a chámár reformer and disciple of Rámánand who

\* Op cit., Vol. II, p. 147.

† Op cit., Vol. II, p. 108.

‡ Op cit., pp. 221-222.



lived in the 15th century; the modern Satnámi creed is a revival of the doctrines of Rám Dás preached by Ghási Das in the early part of the present century.\* Ghási Das, an unlettered but thoughtful chámár, was deeply impressed with the degraded condition of his community, who were strongly addicted to drink and other vicious habits. He gradually acquired considerable influence by his wisdom and high moral character, and gathered round him a handful of devoted followers. One morning he collected them, and telling them to assemble all the chámárs at a particular spot after six months, himself retired behind the hills in the south-eastern portion of Chhattisgar to meditate and hold communion with God. On the appointed day a large concourse of the Chhattisgari chámárs was brought together to receive God's word from Ghási Dás. The reformer slowly appeared with the rising sun and gave them the message; which was to the effect, that there is only one true God (the Sat Nám), that all men are equal, that the idols of the Hindus are false, and that meat, intoxicating liquors, and smoking are interdicted. The assembled chámárs received the message with great enthusiasm and the Satnámi sect was established. Ghási Dás became their Guru or Primate and declared the office to be hereditary.

The chámárs gradually found out, that it was hard work abstaining from all the good things of the world, and those who wished to indulge in smoking, formed themselves into a sub-sect called *Chungíá*. A *chungi* is a leaf (preferably that of Palás, *Butea frondosa*) rolled into the form of a pipe in which tobacco is smoked: hence the name of the sub-sect. The *Chungias*, however, appear to have unrestricted social intercourse with the more orthodox members of the community.

The dissemination of the Satnámi doctrines infused new life into the chámárs, and they rose to positions of comparative influence and respectability, which apparently made them an eye-sore to their Hindu neighbours, to whom the very name of chámár is a byword for all that is degraded. Besides, the protest of the Satnámis against the idolatrous practices of the Hindus aggravated the enmity of the latter. Several attempts were, I am told, made against the life of Ghási Dás, but none succeeded. But, his son and successor Bálak Dás was murdered in 1860. Persecution to any serious extent is of course impossible under British rule, but affrays between the Hindus and the Satnámis, now and then occur. Where the latter are in the minority, the former, I am informed would not allow the guru of the latter to ride on an elephant and go in procession through their villages.

The guru goes on tour in great state, with elephants, camels, and

\* Hunter's Gazetteer, Vol. XI, p. 372.

a large following. The name of the present guru is Agar Dás. The Satnámis prostrate themselves before him and give him presents according to their means. He has his deputies called Bhándáris scattered all over the country, who collect his dues; sometimes, villages are farmed out to them at fixed amounts. The Bhándáris represent the guru in all social ceremonies. It is said that the bride associates with the guru or his representative before entering her husband's home. But the chámáris stoutly deny this, and assert it to be a calumny invented by their Hindu enemies. It is difficult to get at the truth in this matter: the bride appears to be presented before the guru or his deputy, and she has to make a present to this functionary.

The Hindus assert that the Satnámis do not act up to their doctrines. There are, of course orthodox and heterodox people amongst all castes, and some Satnámis certainly do not abstain from meat.

The Satnamis salute by bowing low, lifting up their left leg, and exclaiming 'Sat Nám, Sat Nám! Their worship consists in exclaiming these sacred words at sunrise and sunset. ["Sat Nám" means 'the right or true name,' *i. e.*, the true god.]

The dead are buried. Relations are fed on the third, fifth, tenth or fifteenth day.

The Satuámis do not observe any class distinctions amongst themselves and are a very compact body.

Gots: Kusariá, Bhatbahari, Banjára, Jarkaria, Aril, &c.

#### *Chámár (Muchi.)*

The Satnámí chámáris have no intercourse with those who prepare hides or work in leather. As in other parts, carcasses of animals contribute to the food of the Muchis.

Worship Dulhá Deo once in two or three years with offerings of rice, &c.

#### *Kabirpanthis.*

These are followers of Kabir, a disciple of the reformer Rámánand, who preached in Northern India in the fifteenth century. The doctrines of the Kabirpanthis are similar to those of the Satnámis: like the latter they are enjoined to abstain from flesh food and spirituous drink, to observe no caste distinctions and not to worship idols. Both forms of faith are protests against the idolatry and caste-system of the Hindus on the one hand, and the vicious habits of the aborigines on the other. There is, however, one point of essential difference. Satnámism forcibly enjoins belief in one God, whereas Kabirpanthism does not do so. Indeed, beyond the guru, and the ordinary village deities like Thákur Deo, and the goddess of small-pox, I am not aware if the Kabirpanthis

have any other object of worship. All the Kabirpanthis I questioned did not certainly declare their belief in one God, as the Satnámis invariably did.

Kabirism notwithstanding its anti-Hindu tenets is not in such bad repute amongst the Hindus as Satnámism is. This is probably due to the fact, that the latter is professed by chámárs only, whereas the former counts amongst its followers many Hindus, not excepting even Bráhmans and Rajputs. The Paukás form the greater majority of the Kabirpanthis of Chhattisgar; I have not met a single Pauká who is not a Kabirpanthi. The Gandas, Telis, Márárs, Kunbis, &c., contribute large numbers, the Telis especially. In these cases, those who become Kabirpanthis are not excommunicated, but continue to live with their caste people: for instance, a Teli's becoming a Kabirpanthi would not interfere with his marrying into a non-Kabirpanthi Teli family. The Brahmans and Rajputs, on becoming Kabirpanthis, are renounced by their castes. Their number, however, is small and they are amply compensated by the bestowal on them of all the fat posts of the order.

Though the Satnámis and the Kabirpanthis equally profess disregard for caste distinctions, the latter do not carry their disregard into practice, or do so to a limited extent. Though Kabir, the founder of the sect, preached the equality of all men and had Muhammadan as well as Hindu followers, I have not come across a single Muhammadan member of the order in Chhattisgar; and it is certain that a chámár will not now be admitted. The Kabirpanthis I have met, usually observe caste restrictions; a Teli Kabirpanthi, for instance, would not eat food cooked by a Pauká belonging to the same order.

The ceremony of conversion is very simple, consisting in blowing the *mantra* into the ear of the convert, and placing a necklacc of wooden beads round his neck.

The constitution of the order is similar to that of the Satnámí sect. There is a gurn who is venerated, worshipped I should say. The gurn lives at Kawarda, the capital of a feudatory state of the same name, in the north-western portion of Chhattisgar. Like the Satnámí gurn he occasionally goes out on tour in great pomp. He has got his deputies called Bhándáris and Mohants dispersed all over the country, who make converts, collect contributions, and officiate at social ceremonies.

The dead are buried. A grave is dug, and the corpse laid in it with the head to the north, and a Molant or, in his absence, some elderly Kabirpanthi blows into its ears some sacred names, and pours into its mouth some cocoanut oil, after which every member of the party with his back to the grave, throws a handful of soil into it, then he turns towards the grave and fills it up. Those who can afford raise a memorial over it.

After three days the head is shaved entirely by near, and partly by remote, relations. The kinsfolk assemble at the house of the deceased and squatting round a raised *dais* (called *chauki*) sing sacred songs.

*The Mán Bháu Sect.*

This sect is similar to the Kabirpanthi and Satnámi sects, in that they all abstain from flesh and spirituous drink and disregard caste. The Mán Bháús believe in Vishnu, and the Bhagavadgítá is their sacred book. They are, in fact, Vaishnavas. There are monks and nuns who are vowed to celibacy; but the larger number are Grihasthas, *i. e.*, householders. The followers of the sect are most numerous in Berar. In Chhattisgar there are not many, and those I met are all householders. The Kátíás (a weaver caste) appear to have been converted *en masse*; there are also followers of Mán Bháu amongst the Telis, Kunbis, &c. I was told, that their guru lives at some place near Ramtek in the district of Nagpur. The process of conversion is very simple, consisting in blowing the *mantra* into the ear of the person who desires to be initiated.

In Chhattisgar, Bráhmans are respected by the Mán Bháús, and I did not notice any ill-feeling between the two which is said to exist in Berar.\*

*Kunbi.*

An essentially agricultural class, allied to the next caste the Kurmi. In the last census returns the number of the latter for the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur is given as 99,620. But the Kunbi is not separately mentioned, and must be included in this number.

A good many of the Kunbis belong to the Mán Bháu sect just described. They worship Vishnu, abstain from flesh food and intoxicating liquors, and bury their dead. The others worship Mahádeo, eat goat's flesh and fish, and practise cremation. The two classes can intermarry if they belong to the same clan.

There are two clans,—1, the Jháriá; 2, Puroli, the former being, as the name signifies, restricted to the jungles, and the latter to the plain country. The division is evidently due to habitat. The two clans do not intermarry.

Those who practise cremation preserve a few bones, and, in the case of the old and well to do, take them to some sacred place and deposit them there. Bones are so deposited in the Mahánadi at Rajim, and in a stream called the Narbada near Chuikhádán.

Caste men are fed 10 days after death.

*Kurmi.*

Allied to the Kunbi.

Gots: Charnáha, Manáha, Singror, Pátaria.

\* Gazetteer of Berar, quoted by Sherring, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 164.

*Teli.*

A large agricultural and trading caste numbering at the last census 203,503 in Raipur, and 61,324 in Biláspur.

The Telis are divided into five clans, *viz.*,—

- I. Garbária—those who have come from Garbá, Mándlá.
- II. Kanojia—those who have come from Kanoj.
- III. Jháriá—those who live in the jungles.
- IV. Ekbanhiás.
- V. Háliás—Distillers.

The Garbárias are divided into 32 gots: Boir, Bágh, Saniehára, Hirwani &c.

Gots of the Kanojia Telis: Sonsat, Sirsat, Souger, Jomkátar, &c.

Gots of Jháriás: Áttháiá, &c.

*Áhir.*

Also called Ránt and Gairá. Number at the last Census in Raipur 141,983; in Biláspur, 85,546. Shepherds, servants, cultivators.

Worship Dulha Deo, Buḡha Deo, &c. The Áhirs have a great festival about Dewali time, when they go about dancing and singing, richly bedecked with strings of *cowri* shells.

They are divided into three clans based I believe, on habitat:

- I. Jháriá—those who live in the jungles.
- II. Kusuriá.
- III. Kanojía—those who are said to have come from Kanoj.

Gots of the Kusuriás: Amádár, Bághwá, Markám, &c.

*Kálár.*

The Kálárs are a rather numerous class, and met with throughout Chhattisgar as distillers, traders and cultivators. They appear to derive their name from 'kal' which is Gondi for liquor, distilling being their main occupation. At the last census they numbered 20,307, in the Raipur district.

*Worship.*—The chief deities are Dulhá Deo, Rátmá, the latter being represented by a flat piece of gold or silver. One informant told me that Bhagaván is the only *pákká* god they worship, the others being what he quaintly expressed as *kátchá*. In the southern portion of Chhattisgar, Báhádur Kalaria and her son Sasan Chábári are worshipped in the Holi time. They were evidently very successful distillers, and lived at Sorar and Gurur, where the remains of their distilleries are still said to be preserved.

*Subdivision.*—The Chhattisgari Kálárs are subdivided into two classes:

- I. Darsená.

II. Gajbhátiá (jungly Kalárs).

The Darsená aro further subdivided into the Chhota and the Bara Darsena, of whom the latter are said to abstain from liquors.

Some of the Kalárs belong to the Kabirpanthi sect.

The dead are buried with the head towards the north.

Gots: Neora, Nág, Dhurná, Sonwani, &c.

*Márár.*

Called also Pátel and Máli. At the last Census numbered 35,096 in Raipur, and 24,541 in Bilaspur. Gardeners and cultivators.

The head of the Márárs is usually shaven in front in the form of a semicircle. The hair is kept long and tied behind in a knot.

They do not appear to have any special objects of worship except their ancestors, to whom they offer *hom*.

The Bastariá Márárs, who appear to be of Gond origin, and with whom the other Márárs have no social intercourse, worship the Gond gods, Buđhá Deo, and Dulhá Deo.

There is no special ceremony for marriage, beyond that kinsfolk are feasted at the time. The bride comes to the house of the bridegroom with her relations and stops there for five days. One wife only is allowed.

Fish is eaten; but meat and intoxicating liquor are prohibited. Some Márárs become Kabirpanthis, when they are said to abstain from fish also.

*Pauká.*

With the next named caste number 35,128 in Raipur. They earn their livelihood as watchmen and weavers, and make but indifferent cultivators.

They all profess to belong to the Kabirpanthi sect.

*Gáudá.*

Closely allied to the Pauká, and follow the same professions.

A good many become Kabirpanthis. These have no social intercourse with the Sákat (Sákta) Gáudás, whose chief deity is Dulhá Deo.

There are three clans: (1) *Bajania*, those who play on tomtoms &c.; (2) Mohariá (3) Bastariá.

*Banjárá.*

An adventurous class of traders. Before the opening up of the railway, the Banjárs used to carry on a roaring trade. Even now strings of Banjára pack-bullocks are to be met on the highways leading from Chhattisgar towards, Mándlá, and Jabalpur. The Banjárs are an essentially nomadic tribe, scarcely ever settling down at any place for

a considerable time. They are, however, now taking to agriculture at places, as their hereditary occupation does not any longer pay, as it used to do a few years ago.

At the last Census, the Banjárás numbered 8,518 in the Raipur district. They worship Banjárá, a goddess represented by a piece of stone daubed with vermilion during Dewali. No priests are required except at marriage, when the services of a Bráhmaṇ are put into requisition. The Banjárás, I am told, make converts of Gonds and other tribes. For some time before, and during the Holi festival, the Banjárá women, old and young, in gala dress, go about in batches from house to house, and village to village, dancing and singing, expecting, of course, presents of money or grain.

The women put on a largo peculiar, conical bonnet, by which they may be easily recognised.

The Banjárás are divided into 18 Gots of which I could get names for ten only. Bhuktiá, Urtiá (Bartia ?), Ráuriá (or Láuriá), Jharbolá, Trie, Kent, Korrá, Pálthiá, Mur, Bádant.

*Keot or Kewát.*

Numerous in the plain country ; at the last Census their number for the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur is given as 85,690. Fishermen, cultivators. Chief god—Deví or Durgá (with four hands). They eat pork.

*Bhuí.*

Allied to Keot, and very likely included in it at the last Census, as I do not find it separately mentioned.

*Mehrá.*

A large class, numbering 26,796, in the Raipur districts at the last Census. The Mehrás act as koṭwáls (watchmen) of villages in the western portion of Chhattísgar. They also follow agricultural and other occupations such as weaving.

Worship Náráyana, and Mahádeo. Some are followers of Mánbháu.

There is one class of Mehrás calling themselves *Beiá* who worship Bhagaván or Súrājnáráyana, and are said to abstain from beef and intoxicating drinks. They have no intercourse with the other Mehrá who will eat anything they can get hold of, carrion not excepted and who are considered very low in the estimation of the Hindus.

The dead are buried with the head to the north. Some selected spot in the house is consecrated to the dead. Caste people are fed three days after death.

*Kátiá.*

A small caste of weavers. They are mostly followers of Mánbháu. The dead are buried.

*Koshṭá.*

A rather large class. Mostly weavers. At the last Census they numbered 17,433, in the district of Raipur.

Gods Dulhá Deo, Rátmái (represented by a flat piece of gold or silver, also worshipped by the Kalárs).

There are two subdivisions (1) Chhattisgari, (2) Mahratti. The former must have been long settled in Chhattisgar, and the latter must be newcomers. The two clans have no social intercourse with each other.

Burial and cremation are both in vogue.

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